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## EXPERIENCE OF COOPERATION BETWEEN BELARUSIAN TRADE AND ECONOMIC UNIVERSITY OF CONSUMER COOPERATIVES AND GERMAN ACADEMIC EXCHANGE SERVICE

The article generalizes the experience of cooperation between the Belarusian Trade and Economic University of Consumer Cooperatives and German Academic Exchange Service, gives practical recommendations to the applicants for international scholarship programs.

В статье обобщен опыт сотрудничества Белорусского торгово-экономического университета потребительской кооперации с Германской службой академических обменов (DAAD), даны практические рекомендации соискателям международных стипендиальных программ.

**Key words:** German Academic Exchange Service; international cooperation in the field of education and science; international scholarship programs; support for talented youth.

**Ключевые слова:** Германская служба академических обменов; международное сотрудничество в области образования и науки; международные стипендиальные программы; поддержка талантливой молодежи.

### Introduction

*Among the main directions of internationalization of Belarusian higher education we can mention the development of international academic relations in the field of education and scientific cooperation*

of universities [1]. A special role in the organization of international mobility of students and scholars belongs to German Academic Exchange Service (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst – DAAD – German), that has had its representatives on the territory of Belarus since 1993 and information center in Minsk since 2003. Since this period the history of fruitful cooperation between DAAD and the Belarusian Trade and Economic University of Consumer Cooperatives (further BTEU) has begun, the results of which will be presented in this article.

**The main part.** German Academic Exchange Service is an international self-governing organization. DAAD was founded in Heidelberg in 1925 to support student mobility. For 93 years of its existence DAAD united more than 230 universities and 130 student unions and supported more than 2 million German and foreign students and scientists.

The main objectives of DAAD are: awarding grants for foreigners and Germans, internationalization of universities, promotion of German studies and the German language abroad, cooperation with developing countries in the field of education and science.

The listed objectives are implemented in more than 250 DAAD programs that include study tours of student groups to Germany, summer university courses, traineeships of teachers and young scientists, training in magistracy and doctoral studies, dissertation defense, invitation to universities of foreign professors for teaching academic disciplines, etc.

DAAD programs are funded by German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Federal Ministry of Education and Research, Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology, The European Union and others.

The structure of DAAD includes the head office in Bonn, 15 regional offices and 57 information centers in 60 countries, including the Republic of Belarus.

The tasks of the Information Center in Minsk are: informing everyone interested about DAAD scholarship programs, about opportunities for training and research in Germany; advising about financing; support of Belarusian and German universities in establishing contacts; assisting applicants in preparing documents for DAAD scholarship programs or for studying in Germany; holding information events in the capital and regions; conducting language tests and a test to determine the ability to learn at the university [2].

The Belarusian Trade and Economic University of Consumer Cooperatives has been cooperating with DAAD Information Center for more than 10 years. This cooperation is realized in various forms, including the holding of information and country geographic seminars on the base of BTEU; attracting university students to participate in cultural and educational activities, conducted with the support of DAAD lecturers; testing the students to determine the level of proficiency in German; granting scholarships to students and teachers of the university. In particular, for the years 2016-2017 at the university Head of the Information Center and DAAD lecturers held 4 thematic seminars that gathered about 140 teachers and students (Table 1).

Table 1 – DAAD seminars held at the base of BTEU in 2016–2017

Date of seminar	Seminar topic	Amount of participants
06.04.2016	Training and research opportunities in Germany	12
09.11.2016	Scholarship programs for students, undergraduates, teachers and scientists	88
29.03.2017	Experience in reforming the higher education system in the framework of the Bologna process	38
29.03.2017	Exchange brings changes	38
Note – The table is compiled by the authors on the basis of data of the Chair of Foreign Languages of the Belarusian Trade and Economic University of Consumer Cooperatives.		

During this period, 33 students of BTEU have presented 24 projects to participate in the competition “Relay.de – Stafette.by”, held with the support of DAAD lecturers at German Weeks for German lovers. At the same time, 29 students participating from the BTEU studied German as the second foreign language, 4 – as the first. Participation in such events allows students to realize their creative potential and practice German in the circle of native speakers (Table 2).

Table 2 – Participation of students of BTEU in the competition “Relay.de – Stafette.by”

Year	Stage name	Amount of participants from BTEU	Amount of submitted projects	Result (place) among Belarusian participants
2016	History and photos	9	7	3, 5
2016	Domino “Germany”	2	2	3, 5
2016	Translation Competition	3	3	5
2017	History and Selfies “Cultural Heritage”	18	11	5
2017	Photo Contest	1	1	5

Note – the table is compiled by the authors on the basis of data of the Chair of Foreign Languages of the Belarusian Trade and Economic University of Consumer Cooperatives.

To create a German speaking environment and to expand the horizons of students, DAAD information center and lecturers annually conduct Republican German-speaking regional geography seminar “Deutschland entdecken” (“Discover Germany”), providing an opportunity to get acquainted with the current trends in the social, cultural and economic life of Germany through participation in trainings, interactive events and discussions (Table 3).

Table 3 – Participation of the students of BTEU in the Republican seminar “Deutschland entdecken”

The name of the seminar	Date and location	Amount of participants from BTEU
VIII seminar dedicated to the 25th anniversary of the unification of Germany	15–18.10.2015, Mogilev	2
IX seminar	27–30.10.2016, Vitebsk	2
X anniversary seminar dedicated to the 500th anniversary of the Reformation	26–29.10.2017, Gomel	5
XI seminar	25–28.10.2019, Polotsk	2

Note – The table is compiled by the authors on the basis of data of the Chair of Foreign Languages of the Belarusian Trade and Economic University of Consumer Cooperatives.

X anniversary seminar was held on the basis of BTEU with the participation of the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany Peter Dettmar, DAAD lecturers, 85 students from 18 universities of Belarus.

The gained experience the students studying German reflect in the reports at international scientific student conferences in Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, Tajikistan (Table 4).

Table 4 – Publication activity of BTEU students studying German

Year	Amount of publications	Geography of publications
2014	3	Gomel – 1, Dushanbe – 2
2015	4	Gomel – 1, Dushanbe – 3
2016	6	Gomel – 2, Donetsk – 2, Poltava – 1, Moscow – 1
2017	14	Gomel – 3, Vitebsk – 1, Donetsk – 4, Poltava – 3, Moscow – 2, Cheboksary – 1

Note – The table is compiled by the authors on the basis of data of the Chair of Foreign Languages of the Belarusian Trade and Economic University of Consumer Cooperatives.

Despite the decrease in the number of BTEU students studying German, for the last five years the granting for applications to the DAAD information center has been activated by students to receive scholarships under the program “Summer university courses”. The decision to award scholarships is made on a competitive basis by independent selection committees from among the professors of universities in Germany. During 2013–2017 BTEU students submitted 9 applications and received 3 scholarships (Table 5).

Table 5 – Participation of BTEU students in DAAD scholarship programs

Academic year	Amount of grant applications	Amount of scholarships received	Place of study
2013/2014	1	1	August 2014, University of Freiburg named after Albert Ludwig
2015/2016	2	0	–
2016/2017	4	1	August 2017, University of Trier
2017/2018	2	1	August 2018, Hamburg Technical University
Note – The table is compiled by the authors on the basis of data of the Chair of Foreign Languages of the Belarusian Trade and Economic University of Consumer Cooperatives.			

According to the results of participation in the summer university courses students organize informational seminars to expand the audience of potential candidates for scholarship programs and increase students' motivation for international project activities. The results of the participation are reflected on the website of the university and in the media (local newspapers).

An important step in the preparation of documents for scholarship programs is onDaF computer testing to determine the level of proficiency in German. During 2015–2017 15 students of BTEU of the following specialties “Commercial Activity”, “Economics and Management”, “World Economy”, “Marketing”, “Logistics”, “Accounting, Analysis, Audit” passed the test (Table 6).

Table 6 – Results of BTEU students on testing on DaF

Date	Amount of tested of students	German proficiency levels
30.10.2015	3	A2 – 2; B1 – 1
09.11.2016	10	A1 – 2; A2 – 6; B1 – 2
17.11.2017	2	B1 – 2
Note – The table is compiled by the authors on the basis of data of the Chair of Foreign Languages of the Belarusian Trade and Economic University of Consumer Cooperatives.		

The students of the second year and the students of the penultimate year of study can apply for scholarship programs if they speak German at least A2.

Analysis of requirements for candidates for DAAD Scholarships, presented on the website [www.daad.by/ru](http://www.daad.by/ru), survey of the foundationers (BTEU students), have become the basis for the following practical recommendations for the potential applicants for scholarship programs:

1) to obtain a certificate of German language proficiency you should pass a trial test, for example, on the site [www.onset.de/](http://www.onset.de/), identifying your weaknesses. If the language proficiency is below the required level you should make and implement a plan to improve your language competence (visiting electives, additional lessons, language courses, independent work with native speakers on-line or with a tutor);

2) when choosing on the site [www.daad.de/hsk-kursliste](http://www.daad.de/hsk-kursliste) two-year language courses in Germany, choose those that are marked with a green asterisk, the price of which includes accommodation. Fill in a special form with their names, dates, place, indicating first the one you give the most preference;

3) when preparing a resume, reflect your personal data, information about school / college / university studies, practical experience, professional and language skills, competencies and abilities, personal qualities and interests, achievements and awards, publications;

4) make a motivation letter; explain why you are applying for a DAAD scholarship and how it will help you achieve your academic, professional and personal goals; why you want to study at the chosen courses; why the chosen university attracted your attention; what you expect (personally, professionally, for a career) from the participation in the courses;

5) collect a letter of recommendation in German / English from a specialized teacher (preferably a PhD), after downloading the form from the above site;

6) prepare a photocopy of the student's record book and its translation into German;

7) fill in the online application form for the scholarship program carefully; upload your resume, a motivation letter, translated into German student's record book, language certificate to the portal, pre-scan them and save in pdf;

8) print the document and send it to the DAAD Information Center by mail, enclosing a teacher's letter of recommendation with a certified signature, forms with information about chosen courses and with the data of the applicant, photocopy of the student's record book in Russian.

### Conclusion

Thus, the cooperation of the Belarusian Trade and Economic University of Consumer Cooperatives and the German Academic Exchange Service has a long history and is characterized by openness, variety of forms, focusing on promoting the internationalization of the university, informational and educational support, that motivate students to learn German, participate in scholarship programs, implemented creatively in educational and cultural DAAD projects, and all of these correspond to the motto of the Service: “Exchange brings changes”.

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